

REMARKS

Claims 1-12 are pending. Reconsideration and allowance based on the below comments are respectfully requested.

Initially, applicants appreciate the opportunity granted their representative to conduct a personal interview on July 8, 2004. During the course of the interview, applicant's representative discussed differences between the claimed invention and the applied prior art, consistent with the comments submitted in the Reply dated June 21, 2004 (which are hereby incorporated by reference for sake of conciseness). During the course of the interview, the Examiner suggested claim amendments to clarify certain aspects of the claimed invention. In this Supplemental Reply, applicants have amended claims 1, 7 and 12 in a manner that is believed to be entirely consistent with the Examiner's suggestions.

At least in view of these amendments and the previously presented arguments concerning the applied prior art, applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection based on the asserted combination of Mutsuga, et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,911,773) in view of Herbst, et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,321,161).

Conclusion

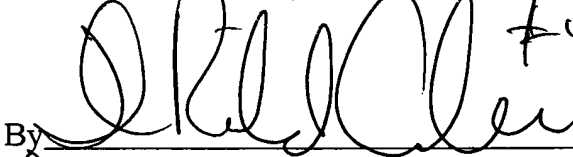
For at least these reasons, it is respectfully submitted that claims 1-12 are distinguishable over the cited patents. Favorable consideration and prompt allowance are earnestly solicited.

Should there be any outstanding matters that need to be resolved in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact Chad J. Billings (Reg. No. 48,917) at the telephone number of the undersigned below, to conduct an interview in an effort to expedite prosecution in connection with the present application.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

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Attachment(s)